



SENTINEL



Volume 39, No. 4

Published in the interest of the Fort McPherson and Fort Gillem community.

January 30, 2009

Tax season underway; filers get help

Don't pay for free services;
volunteer tax preparers
available at Fort McPherson

Marcia E. Parker
U.S. Army Garrison,
Office of the Staff Judge Advocate

How would you like to pay a super-high price to borrow money that already belongs to you? Sounds ridiculous, right? That's what happens to many people at tax time when they choose to take out refund anticipation loans (RALs).

You may be tempted by tax-time advertisements for "fast cash refunds," "express money" or "instant refunds."

These ads offer patrons their refund in just a day or two, or even on the spot.

Beware! Many of these "fast refunds" are actually RALs.

Volunteers at the Tax Center on Fort McPherson can help you avoid paying any fees on your refund by providing free tax preparation and electronic filing.

When you get a RAL, you're borrowing against your own tax refund. RALs are often marketed to people who need money quickly – the low- to moderate-income workers who receive the earned income tax credit.

RALs are extremely expensive. Loan fees range from \$30 to \$90, which translates

into annual percentage rates from about 60 percent to more than 700 percent.

That's a lot of money owed just to get a tax refund a few days earlier than you would be able to get free by using the services at the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site, located in the Tax Center, Bldg. 52.

RALs fees, combined with tax preparation, electronic filing and other fees, can end up eating away a big portion of the refund. Additionally, RALs are risky. Since a RAL is a loan from a bank in partnership with a tax preparer, it must be repaid even if the Internal Revenue Service denies or delays the refund, or if the refund is smaller than expected. If patrons default on the loan, the lender could take action to hurt their credit rating and may send the account to a debt collector.

By electronically filing, tax payers can receive the refund in about 10 days.

The center is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. by appointment, with walk-ins daily from 1 until 3:30 p.m.

For more information, call 464-2438.



Photo by Kevin Stabinsky

Tax Center opens doors to filers

Col. Deborah Grays (right), U.S. Army Garrison commander, and Marcia Parker, chief of the Legal Assistance Section of the garrison Office of Staff Judge Advocate, officially open the Fort McPherson Tax Center Monday in a ribbon-cutting ceremony held at Bldg. 52. "This is one of the most phenomenal programs on post," Grays said, adding that with the current financial crisis, the money saved by those using the free services at the center will help even more. The Tax Center is open to active duty military, activated Reserve and National Guard Soldiers and retirees. Last year, the center saved the military community \$432,362 in filing fees.

Be on the lookout for suspicious activities

Security officials estimate there will be some kind of terrorist attack during the first year of office of our newly elected commander in chief. It's everyone's job to make sure that doesn't happen at Fort McPherson or Fort Gillem.

February is designated as Antiterrorism Awareness Month at our installations, and the *Sentinel* staff will present articles that explain preventive antiterrorism measures you can take, basic steps to take if a crisis hits and how antiterrorism intelligence information is received and processed with recommendations, then formulated for my potential action.

You need to pay attention to these articles and refresh yourself on the antiterrorism training you received. At the end of February our command exercise will test the knowledge and reactions of our leaders, evaluating how prepared we are and how we can improve.

Perhaps you are familiar with the law enforcement term BOLO – “be on the lookout.” I want you to put the BOLO mindset into action and stay vigilant for things that “just aren't quite right.” Is there suddenly an unidentified or odd-looking package in your office area, hallway, dormitory room or bathroom? Is someone taking photographs on post that you don't think is authorized to do so? Is someone parked in his or her car at the MARTA station, just

Commander's Corner

Col. Deborah B. Grays

Garrison Commander
Fort McPherson & Fort Gillem



watching the front gate? If you can answer “yes” to any of these questions or you come across someone or something that just doesn't seem right, you need to take immediate action and alert the appropriate personnel. From your office phone, dial 911. From your mobile phone, call the Fort McPherson police station at 464-2281 or 464-2282. Dial 404-469-5981 or 469-5982 for Fort Gillem's police station.

Your “suspicious” package could turn out to be a box of envelopes from the local office supply store left in the hallway by the FedEx or UPS delivery person because the office door was locked and no one was available to sign for it. That's okay. We would much rather check these things out and find there is nothing to them than to assume everything is fine and then have an incident at one of our installations.

Earlier, I said security is your job, but it's more than a “job.” It's our individual duty to be as prepared as possible and to repel threats whenever possible. When, despite our best efforts, a threat lands at our doorstep, we should rapidly and appropriately respond to and neutralize that threat. The time to learn and prepare for it is not when the threat happens, but well before it happens. Our actions during a time of crisis need to be mechanical and well rehearsed. That's why focusing on antiterrorism is so important and conducting exercises critical.

AER offers help

Army Emergency Relief (AER) is available to help Soldiers, retirees, survivors and their Families with emergency financial assistance.

Circumstances in which Families may need AER include: help with emergency travel, medical or dental expenses, prevention of

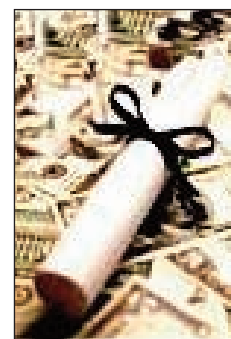
eviction, the first month's rent and security deposit; food; auto repair and a portion of funeral expenses.

The program provides interest-free loans and grants to servicemembers with valid emergency needs.

For more information, call 464-4070, 464-2961 or 464-2498.

Scholarship application deadline nears

The deadline for applicants submitting essays for the Scholarships for Military Children Program is Feb. 18. Applicants should prepare to submit an essay on the following topic: “What would you place



inside a time capsule to help people in the next century understand military life today?”

Only dependent, unmarried children (younger than age 23) of active duty, reserve, National Guard and retired military members, survivors of servicemembers who died while on active duty or survivors of individuals who died while receiving retired pay

from the military may apply for a scholarship. Eligibility is determined using the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) database.

The applicant must be planning to attend, or already be attending, an accredited college or university full time in the fall of 2009, or be enrolled in a program of studies designed to transfer directly into a four-year program.

Scholarship applications are available in commissaries on Fort McPherson and Fort Gillem and online at www.commissaries.com and www.militaryscholar.org.



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www.mcpherson.army.mil.

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The SENTINEL is a civilian enterprise publication, authorized under AR 360-1. It is printed each Friday by the News Daily for U.S. Army Soldiers and civilians employed at Fort McPherson and Fort Gillem and their families. The SENTINEL is published, using offset press, by the Fort McPherson Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Garrison, 1386 Troop Row SW, Fort McPherson, GA 30330-1069, telephone 404-464-2028. The printed circulation is 6,000.

Contents of the SENTINEL are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the United States Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or Headquarters, Fort McPherson. All editorial content of the SENTINEL is prepared, edited and approved by the Fort McPherson Public Affairs Office.

The submission deadline is the Friday before the intended issue is published. Submissions must include all pertinent information and a point of contact name and telephone number. The SENTINEL staff reserves the right to edit or decline submissions. Submissions can be sent by mail to the Public Affairs Office, by fax to 404-464-3659 or by e-mail to

mcpherson_sentinel@conus.army.mil.

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Garrison HotLine

Persons who have a problem or concern about a garrison service or organization can submit a comment through the Interactive Customer Evaluation (ICE) system at http://ice.disa.mil/index.cfm?fa=site&site_id=448. You may also use the yellow or blue customer comment cards found at boxes hanging in facilities throughout Fort McPherson and Fort Gillem. Look for the blue or yellow cards by a hanging box designed for depositing the completed cards. For faster service, customers can call the Garrison HotLine at 404-469-5959. Telephone calls will be answered within 48 hours.

New career field gives NCOs chance to spend government money; contractors gain transferrable skills for use after military obligation

Robin Brown
Sentinel editor



Traditionally, becoming an NCO means taking on more responsibility. Sometimes those responsibilities are not only new to them, but are new to the Army, also.

As the Army salutes its “backbone,” it is also integrating, training and educating Soldiers with the newest military occupational specialty (MOS), 51C (acquisition, logistics and technology (AL&T) contracting NCO).

These NCOs are more than hand receipt holders for tables, chairs and sticky note supplies. The initial group of Soldiers to reclassify into the new MOS were logistical Soldiers in career fields 92A (automated logistics specialist) and 92Y (unit supply specialist) who performed duties involving request, receipt, storage, issue, accountability and preservation of individual, organizational, installation and expendable supplies and equipment.

The new contracting NCOs will support the Army’s increasing need for contingency contracting capability in the modular force and are being assigned to the Army Sustainment Command – formerly the Army Field Support Command – at Rock Island Arsenal, Ill.

At Fort McPherson, the 610th Contingency Contracting Team works with the Mission Installation Contracting Command to support installation operations by helping to select contractors for services like lawn maintenance, painting and trash pickup. They also support the Soldiers’ mission by helping them prepare for current and future missions abroad. Overseas, the mission takes on a greater challenge.

“We are the forward frontline support Soldiers need,” said Sgt. 1st

Class Jason Hughes, a contract specialist with the 610th. “We procure everything from chairs to concrete sidewalks by hiring the contractors to produce whatever commanders need to be operational when the unit arrives in theater.”

Contracting NCOs receive the same Defense Acquisition University (DAU) training opportunities in the contracting field that are available to the Army’s acquisition officers and Civilian employees. In the first four to five years of their careers, AL&T contracting NCOs will require more technical training than leadership training because their focus will be on mission support, deployment and contracting statutes, laws and regulations, Hughes explained.

“Interested NCOs need to be self motivated, independent and able to work unsupervised,” Hughes said. “Training is hard and negotiation skills are vital. We learn policies, attend ethics and cultural training events and more, since we are always working hand-in-hand with foreign nationals and embassy officials. From a business perspective, what these companies see is an official U.S. government employee. I represent the Army in this uniform – that alone is a lot of responsibility.”

The growing needs of the Army require more certified contractors; therefore, NCOs in any career management field, in both the active and Reserve components, who meet reclassification prerequisites for MOS 51C are eligible to apply for reclassification. These Soldiers must be in the ranks of staff sergeant or sergeant first class with less than 10 years of active Federal service. They must submit a recommendation letter signed by a battalion commander (in ranks of lieutenant colonel or higher), copies of college transcripts or a diploma from an accredited institution and copies of training certification related to contract training, if applicable.



Visitors to the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center (USAASC) kiosk learn how to navigate the Web site and receive valuable career advice from career counselors in the Assistant Secretary of the Army (acquisition, logistics and technology) booth at the 2008 AUSA annual meeting and exposition held Oct. 6 through 8 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington D.C. USAASC supports the Army’s acquisition mission through personnel development systems and management support capabilities, equipping the nation’s forces while improving the organization.

Photo by McArthur Newell

Each NCO must submit verification of a security clearance, meet height and weight standards according to AR 600–9 (The Army Weight Control Program), exhibit stability in personal affairs as outlined in AR 600–20 (Army Command Policy), be competitive for promotion and have had a successful tour in a leadership role and no derogatory information in their Official Military Personnel File.

Contracting teams are composed of two officers and two NCOs. Once accepted in the career field, contracting NCOs get their hands-on training alongside other Soldiers at established training sites, such as the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.; Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La.; and Yakima Training Center in Yakima, Wash.

“Our teams are on the ground in each of the areas of responsibility before the first servicemembers

arrive, and will be the last ones to leave. We support all three phases of a movement: contingency, sustainment and close out,” Hughes said.

The teams usually are assigned to the joint command, so it’s important they know what units need and a little about the environment Soldiers will enter. “It’s our business to support the commanders on the ground – procure lease vehicles from local vendors, get tents, shelters, food and any other force protection and life support equipment necessary,” Hughes said.

The career field is small, with about 300 NCOs with a mission to support the troops. “That mission sometimes requires us to move swiftly and independently,” Hughes said. Working with foreign nationals, he said, it’s important to know exactly what you want by type, color, size and quantity.

Beyond the stringent selection

See NCO on page 7

Safety Central

Beware of danger on stairs

Stairs are often the cause of many different accidents, some of which are fatal. But stairs are particularly dangerous for the elderly and for small children.

There are some simple steps to take to reduce the risk of injuries or death. The first step for safety on stairs is to make sure there are lights to illuminate the way. The second step is to make sure the stairs are all in good repair and there aren't any uneven or raised surfaces.

Stairs are a leading injury risk to seniors. Because trauma, including slips and falls, are quite common among the elderly, finding ways to promote recovery, while also working with prevention, will be important to the long-term outcome.

Falling is a common fear for the elderly. In fact, a significant number of hospitalization for the elderly involve the treatment and recovery of injuries that have arisen out of a fall. While falls can result in soft-tissue injury, some elderly adults suffer more complex health issues, including fractures and breaks.

While climbing stairs rarely produces an injury, the descent on stairs can be quite risky for the elderly population because their depth perception can be skewed with age. Additionally, stairs that are not uniform in dimension can create confusion and result in injury, as well. When descending stairs, the areas that create the most risk are the first three and last three steps. At the beginning of a descent, there is a tendency to feel over confident with these steps and falls occur. Making sure the lighting is adequate in these areas and dimensions are correct on

these steps may ensure the risk for falling is reduced.

Seniors get hurt on stairs because:

- They slipped or fell
- They tripped over objects on the steps



File photo

- The stair treads were loose
- They were not holding the handrail
- The handrails were missing
- They were holding objects with one or both hands
- The stairway was poorly maintained

There are 11 easy steps to ensure safety on stairs.

- Maintain stairway components.
- Keep the stairs free of clutter.
- Have at least one handrail (preferably on the right side, descending) for stairways less than 44 inches wide.
- Have two handrails for stairways more than 44 inches wide.
- Have a handrail on both sides and midway between the sides for stairways more than 88 inches wide.
- Provide a platform where doors open directly onto a stairway, and ensure the swing of the door has 20 inches of effective width on the platform.
- Remove loose carpet or coverings from the stairs.
- Add slip-resistant material.
- Take your time to go up and down the stairs. Rushing can only increase the risk, especially when carrying children, pets or heavy objects.
- Look for hazards, like water or other slippery liquids, boxes, parts or equipment and small objects like nuts and bolts or pens one might slip on on the stairs.
- Take stairs one step at a time.

File copy

In my opinion ...

It's time for change

Kevin Stabinsky
Sentinel assistant editor

Jan. 20, 2008, I was in Iraq serving with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division in the Arab Jabour region south of Baghdad. Needless to say, it is quite a change from this year. My Army Combat Uniform, rather than clinging to my body, lies tucked in a box in my modest closet. Having an apartment is a large change from my centralized housing unit that was basically a metal box serving as a two-person trailer on Forward Operating Base Kalsu. Though I still serve the Army, my role changed from a NCO to a government Civilian.



Change is in the air. With the inauguration of President Barack Obama, America witnessed an African-American man ascend to the highest office in the land. Americans crowded the Mall of America in Washington, D.C., to witness the historic event, to see power transferred from outgoing President George W. Bush to his successor. Like a military change of command, minus the guidon, a new leader took the helm of the organization – in this case the country – and those in uniform received a new commander-in-chief. Despite the change, the mission of our military remains the same. Unlike many Americans looking for the fulfillment of the promises of change

pledged by the then-Senator Obama during his campaign for the presidency, life for many of our Soldiers will not change. They will still be separated from Family and friends at home, fighting overseas and missing birthdays, holidays, and special events in their Families' lives. They put their lives on the line so that we can live in peace and enjoy the benefits of freedom.

Though withdrawals from Iraq are in the works, until the last troop is pulled out, our servicemen and -women will remain in harm's way. Americans must realize that even as the war in Iraq winds down, the War on Terror still rages on. Many of our resources and personnel will be shifted to the Afghanistan front.

As a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, I understand some of the pain and hardships endured by these great men and women serving so valiantly. My heart and prayers go out to each Soldier whenever I see news of a unit mobilizing. Likewise, when I see units returning, remember some of the joy and euphoria I experienced when I returned home.

I hope that as many Americans look forward to the change and assistance promised them by this new administration during this economic downtime, they look beyond themselves. I hope that we can turn our eyes and prayers to those who nobly serve that government and fight for freedom and allow our nation to be a beacon of light in an otherwise troubled world.

In the words of former President John F. Kennedy, we should "Ask

See Change on page 6



Managing your emotions: don't let stress leave your life a mess



Kevin Stabinsky
Sentinel assistant editor

Rich or poor. Soldier or Civilian. Officer or enlisted. Old or young. No matter who you are, stress does not discriminate.

Stress, despite negative connotations associated with it, is a natural reaction to a danger or demand, according to the pamphlet "About Stress Management," a Channing L. Bete Company pamphlet available at Army Community Services (ACS). Stress is an age-old survival response intended to give someone the extra strength needed to fight off or flee from danger.

In a stressful situation, the body experiences a variety of physical reactions, including muscle tightening, blood pressure rising, heart rate increasing and the body producing extra adrenaline, according to the pamphlet.

While the response can be beneficial temporarily, long-term stress harms the body, said Kelly Walters, a stress counselor for ACS.

Too much stress has been medically linked to ulcers, allergies, high blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes, according to "About Stress Management."

Stress also affects the mind by triggering:

- * low self-esteem and self-worth
- * the way a person relates to other people by making him or her more difficult to deal with and
- * the way a person relates to the world by depleting him or her of ener-

gy needed to interact with others.

Such strain on interaction can be detrimental to an organization, according to the pamphlet.

Stress can come from a variety of sources, both personal and professional, Walters said. For Fort McPherson and Fort Gillem employees, much of the stress may be caused by the pending base realignment and closure, she added.

To address and combat the potential pitfalls of the stress many are feeling, Walters said there are a variety of resources available on the installation: the chaplain's office, the Wellness Center and ACS. The staff in each of these offices can provide options for stress relief.

In addition to offering counseling, ACS holds classes to help people deal with stress. Walters instructed one class Jan. 28 on understanding the symptoms, causes and

affects of stress, techniques to deal with stress brought on by change, methods for controlling stress and techniques to lessen stress. The class was designed to educate people on ways to positively reduce stress and give them breathing exercise techniques to use at work and home.

Walters has been teaching similar classes for more than 10 years.

Developing such techniques, though they seem minor, are a major way to cut down on the

negatives of stress, according to the pamphlet. Planning a stress management program increases physical and emotional well-being. People should select coping strategies that match their stress symptoms, said Peter Neidig of Behavioral Science Associates and the author of the "Work and Home Stress Management Workbook."

People stressed out at work should find barriers between work and home to avoid having stress spill from one environment to the other. For example, Neidig writes, if a family is stressed out by lack of fun, it should go out more. Spouses stressed out by their partner giving orders should talk to their partners about making requests instead.

In creating a positive management program, people should include a mixture of exercising, eating right and getting enough sleep, the pamphlet advises. Finding a hobby to enjoy daily for at least half an hour can also help prevent people from turning to negative means to escape stress.

Drugs like alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, barbiturates and tranquilizers are negative ways to deal with stress.

Although stress is normally something to avoid, it can have its benefits, said Walters.

Eustress, a positive form of stress, is encountered during desirable events, such as winning a competition, completing a challenge, getting a promotion or falling in love.

"Stress can be good because it can keep someone going, focused and motivated," Walters said.

However, eustress, like regular stress, can become dangerous when prolonged or experienced to a very high degree, she added.

Signs of too much stress can manifest themselves in both physical and psychological ways, the pamphlet states.

Physical signs include nervousness, nail biting, cold hands and feet, muscle tension, lack of energy and headaches. Psychological signs include confusion, depression, changes in sleeping, eating and sexual habits, mood changes, increased use of

alcohol and other drugs, increased irritability and crankiness. Since sometimes these issues may be caused by other medical reasons, when in doubt, people should consult a doctor, the pamphlet warns.

Although the classes offered by ACS are not designed to diagnose, they do contain self-assessments, Walters said.

"Everyone has stress in some form or fashion," she said. "We want people to be able to deal with this stress and change."

The next stress class dealing with change is planned for Feb. 25 from 1:30 until 3 p.m. at ACS, Bldg. 62 at Fort McPherson.

"Hopefully, people will take this and enjoy it and come back for other classes," Walters said.

For more information, call the ACS staff at 464-4070.



Change from page 4

not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.” While we may not all be called to serve our country overseas in a combat zone, there is no reason why we can’t serve those who serve. We can keep them in our prayers, support them through the United Service Organization and other groups that support our troops or perform our

daily duties professionally, knowing that we do so in support of them. If you haven’t taken time to thank a veteran and show your appreciation, do so today. Countless veterans walk amongst us, in and out of uniform, and all deserve our thanks. If you haven’t shown that support today, in the words of our current president, “it is time for change.”



**Run for
your heart
... or your
sweetheart!**

*Valentine's
5K
Fun Run
Walk*

Feb. 11
11:30 a.m.
Hedekin Field
Fort McPherson

Registered
participants who
cross the
finish line take
home a teddy
bear prize.
Registration is
free.
Refreshments will
be provided.
For more
information, call
464-2409.

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NCO from page 3

process used to determine who can reclassify into the contracting field, the Army is careful when handing out taxpayer dollars.

"We are certified and have to be good stewards of government money," Hughes said. "We are out there on our own, quite often, so it takes lots of training. We have to make informed decisions based on market research and a Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement rating."

Promotable staff sergeants must reclassify into the career field, and with that usually comes a monetary bonus; however, the benefits may outweigh the cash.

"Benefits of this job include gaining skills that are 100 percent transferable to the civilian workforce," Hughes said. "The Federal Acquisition Certification in contracting we receive is the same that Civilians get, plus we get the best hands-on training available anywhere by doing it every day."

Above those two perks, Hughes said, "I can see the fruits of my labor every time the Soldiers get what they need in a timely fashion. Every time a structure is rebuilt because I found the right guys to get the job done. Every time the troops arrive and the facilities are in place for them to walk in and create a temporary home. It's important to me that Soldiers know they can count on me to get what they need. I can procure more commercial, off-the-shelf items instead of them having to wait four months using the General Services Administration system. We take cash and credit with us to those forward locations to take care of things immediately. That's what NCOs do."

For more information on becoming an AL&T contracting NCO, active duty NCOs can call 703-805-2732, send an e-mail message to gregg.rupkalvis@us.army.mil or send inquiries to U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center, ATTN: NCO Proponent (CMF 51), Bldg. 202, 9900 Belvoir Road, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-5567. Reserve Component NCOs can request reclassification for MOS 51C through Army Human Resources Command-St Louis, ATTN: AHRC-RSE-Q, 1 Reserve Way, St. Louis, MO 63132-5200. Charles Mitchell can be reached at 314-592-0608 or by e-mail message to charles.a.mitchell@us.army.mil. National Guard NCOs should send requests to National Guard Bureau, Acquisition Career Management Officer, ATTN: NGB-ZA-PARC-ACM, 1411 Jefferson Davis Hwy, Arlington, VA 22202-3231. Thomas Drinkwater is the point of contact and can be reached at 703-607-0163 or by an e-mail message to thomas.drinkwater@us.army.mil.

Army strives to decrease sexual assault, increase underreporting of crimes

Through its Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention and Response Program, the Army hopes to change command climates to make victims of sexual assault feel more comfortable reporting the crime.

During a meeting with members of the press Monday, Secretary of the Army Pete Geren discussed the Army's efforts to reduce sexual assault within the ranks, a crime he said that is not just an assault on a person, but on the whole Army.

"Since Sept. 11, 2001, we've had 1,800 Soldiers that have been punished for sexually assaulting a fellow Soldier," Geren said. "Soldier-on-Soldier violence – sexual assault is a crime everywhere, but in the Army, it is a crime that is more than just a crime against the victim. In the Army, it is a crime against the core values that bind our Army together."

Sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes in the United States and in the Army as well, said Carolyn Collins, program manager of the Army's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program (SAPR). Through the SAPR program, the Army hopes to change the cultural climate so Soldiers who are victims of sexual assault will be more likely to report the crime.

"The last couple of years we have seen a bit of a plateau in the reporting, but ... we are certainly still having convictions of sexual assault," Collins said. "We know we are not where we want to be yet. We are looking to increase our propensity to report, and bring down the actual number of assaults. We are looking to close that gap. We want to raise the number of reports so we can get more investigated, and hold offenders accountable for those actions, and we want to reduce the number."

The Army is also doing more to ensure that when Soldiers report a sexual assault, the crime is properly investigated and prosecuted.

Geren has approved funding to provide 15 special victim prosecutors – that's additional personnel billets within the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps – that will be filled from within the ranks by those that have proven

themselves as especially effective prosecutors and who also have experience in sexual assault prosecution.

"They will focus exclusively on those cases, and on training the balance of our prosecutorial and defense force on those kinds of cases," said Maj. Gen. Scott Black, judge advocate general of the U.S. Army. "They will have previous experience, and special training, as well. The idea is to pick people who are ... very, very good in the prosecutorial function, and then ... have experience in this particular area of prosecution. We are identifying them now."

Black said those special prosecutors would come from the JAG ranks, serve for a minimum three-year tour and would be positioned at installations such as Fort Bragg, N.C., and Fort Hood, Texas, where there are large concentrations of Soldiers.

Brig. Gen. Rodney Johnson, the provost marshal general of the Army, said the service will add an additional 30 special investigators to be assigned at 22 of the Army's largest installations to assist Criminal Investigation Command agents in investigating sexual assault crimes.

Those investigators, Johnson said, would provide insight into how civilian juries look at sexual assault cases and what kinds of evidence are needed to prosecute. The investigators would also look at sexual predator and victim behavior and the scientific perspective of sexual assault investigation.

An additional seven "highly qualified experts" are also coming aboard, Johnson said, to provide training and assistance to Criminal Investigation Division (CID) agents.

"We in CID already have highly skilled agents investigating these crimes," Johnson said. "But bringing the civilian expertise onboard will simply be a valuable tool to glean insight and a fresh perspective in many areas. Our special agents and supervisors will be working shoulder-to-shoulder with those highly qualified experts on our most challenging and complex cases."

Black said there are already four of those experts on board, with the remaining to be brought in by mid-February.



File photo

Fans predict Super

Kevin Stabinsky
Sentinel assistant editor

There is always an important conversation between a father and his son that the son will always remember. The conversation between me and my father came last spring at the beginning of the baseball season. I was home on leave from Iraq.

Ben Franklin said only two things in life are certain: death and taxes. Had he lived a few centuries later, he could probably add that Philadelphia professional sports teams are going to stink.

As my father and I watched a Phillies' game, who true to form were stinking it up, he gave a defeated sigh and complained, "I don't think I'll ever see a Philly team win another championship in my lifetime."

Of course, God with His strange sense of humor, allowed the Phillies to win a World Series, proving my father wrong. I hope he lives much longer to see many more Philadelphia teams win a major championship. Nevertheless, that heartfelt pain my father felt at being a Philadelphia fan resonated with me. In addition to his genes, I now carry with me his desire to root, root, root for the home team.

Despite not following professional sports, I had to root the big lugs on when God performed another miracle for Philadelphia by allowing the Eagles to get into the playoffs. For a while it seemed the grace of God was on our side: we held off the marauding Minnesota Vikings, stood tall above the New York Giants and were set to face the Arizona Cardinals – a team the Eagles stuffed like a Thanksgiving turkey. Fly Eagles fly onto the Superbowl.

Winning is great, but it is even better when the team lying defeated at your feet is an archrival.

An interstate Superbowl looked imminent, one that us Philly fans could rest

assured of winning. We beat the Steelers earlier in the year. We were playing much better later in the season, when we melted the Steelers down. We had the drive to not only win the World Series, but also the Superbowl in the same year. Our engine was cranking out horsepower that would let the Eagles steamroll over any opposition.

Sometime between Jan. 11 and 18, someone siphoned out our gas and the Eagles crash landed in Arizona, leaving me without a team to root for. Well, not entirely.

First, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, so even though two weeks ago I was hoping for a Pittsburgh defeat in the Superbowl, I have to rescind my statement. It won't happen because of the Eagles.

Second, how can I root for the team that knocked off the team I was rooting for. Finally, if the home team isn't around for the big game, you have to root for the next door neighbor.

So, for a brief three or four hours Sunday, my white and green will be replaced by yellow and black. Some might argue that the Steelers have had their time in the sun, and that Arizona, long deprived of a Superbowl appearance, with only two championships to their name (ironically, the first was controversial and given to them after it was stripped from the Pottsville Maroons, my real home team having grown up in the outskirts of Pottsville city limits; all the more reason to hate the Cardinals), deserve to win, that it would be better for football nationwide if fresh blood was introduced.

Now, I have to support state rights in this case.

Sorry Cardinals fans, but this Sunday, while you're hoping for your long awaited Super Bowl victory, I'll be following the tradition of my anthracite forefathers, chanting the famous Pottsville curse.

Pittsburgh



Steelers



Super Bo

Super Bowl XLIII is a professional football championship game conducted by the National Football League. Participants include the champions of the American Football Conference (AFC) and the National Football Conference (NFC) of the National Football League.

While most people watching the Super Bowl know a little about the teams playing, what they may not know are these facts:

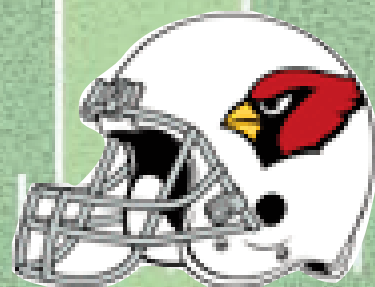
- The winning team gets the Vince Lombardi Trophy (pictured), named for the Green Bay Packers' coach who won the first two Super Bowl games and three of the five preceding NFL championships for 1961 through 62 and 1965.
- Super Bowl III was the first to be numbered. Super Bowls I and II were not known as such until the game's third year and were named "The AFC-NFC World Championship Game."
- The breakdown of wins is: AFC – 20, NFC – 22.
- There has never been a Super Bowl overtime, although three games have been tied in the final minute.
- There has never been a Super Bowl shutout; every Super Bowl participant has scored at least 3 points.

AFC

Bowl XLIII winners



Arizona



Cardinals

Super Bowl facts

- No Super Bowl has ever been scoreless at halftime.
- No team or coach has ever won more than two consecutive Super Bowls.
- No coach has ever won Super Bowls with two different clubs.
- Touchdowns have been scored in every game to date.
- The Super Bowl has been designated a national special security event by the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of Homeland Security following the September 11 attacks.
- Nine active NFL teams are winless in the Super Bowl appearances: the Buffalo Bills, the Cincinnati Bengals, the Tennessee Titans, the San Diego Chargers, the Philadelphia Eagles, the Minnesota Vikings, the Atlanta Falcons, the Carolina Panthers, and the Seattle Seahawks. If the Arizona Cardinals lose Sunday they will join this list.
- Five active NFL teams have yet to appear in a Super Bowl: the Cleveland Browns, the Detroit Lions, the Houston Texans, the Jacksonville Jaguars, and the New Orleans Saints.

Péter J. Chadwick
Contributing writer

Well, Super Bowl XLIII is this Sunday and I'm more pumped than a Saudi oil well.

What's funny is, my team is not even playing. My Indianapolis Colts were unceremoniously dumped by the evil San Diego Chargers in the first week of wild card play.

Usually when that happens (more often than I'd like to admit), I'm pretty much done until the April draft. Unless the New England Patriots or the Dallas Cowboys make it to the big game, then I'm rooting for the other guy. Fortunately, they haven't played each other for the championship yet.

Excuse me for the digression.

Anyway, this year is huge for all of football-dom. For the first time since 1947, the Cardinals are going to the big game.

That would be the Arizona Cardinals. Back in the 40s, they were in Chicago.

In fact, this storied franchise is the oldest continuous franchise and charter member of the original National Football League (NFL).

They began as the Morgan Athletic Club 1898, a mere 33 years after the end of the Civil War. They went on to be the Normal Cardinals, then Racine, both in the Chicago area, and finally took the Windy City's name.

They had a temporary name change in 1946. World War II took a toll on available players, so The Cards merged with the Pittsburgh Steelers, the ancestors of the

team they will face Sunday in Tampa Bay, Fla.

The Card-Pitts, as they were called, were more like the "carpets" as they went winless for that season.

The next year, the Cardinals, sans the merger, took their 9-3 season into their home field at Comiskey Park in Chicago, and defeated the 8 and 4 Philadelphia Eagles for the NFL championship.

In 1948, the Cards met the Eagles again, but lost. They never really got that fire back.

After a 2-10 record in 1959, Cardinals owner Bill Bidwell moved the red birds to St. Louis, where another team by the same name was playing baseball.

In 1988, Bidwell, who served as ball boy for the '47 champions, moved them to Arizona, where their hapless ways seemed to continue ... until today.

Now, they threaten to topple the vaunted Steelers who, though they've never won an NFL championship in the golden years, have five Vince Lombardi trophies, the Super Bowl victor's prize, in their case. They earned the last one three years ago in Super Bowl XL, when they defeated another bird from the National Football Conference West, the Seattle Seahawks.

As good as the boys from "steel town" are and as deserving as they may be to represent the American Football Conference, I don't believe this is their year.

This year it's going to be a team in scarlet that's been waiting 62 years to re-emerge as the NFL's best.

It's time for the red birds to fly to the top. It's in the Cards.

N F C

Pilot program helps simplify disability evaluation process for wounded, ill servicemembers

The Defense Department is working with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to expand a pilot program that simplifies the current disability evaluation process for wounded, injured and ill servicemembers.

The Disability Evaluation System (DES) pilot program is aimed at helping wounded servicemembers obtain faster access to TRICARE and other healthcare and VA benefits by developing a single medical examination used by both DoD and VA, with a single source disability evaluation done by VA and accepted by DoD.

The pilot, implemented in November 2007 in the National Capitol Region, is slated to expand to 19 additional installations by June 1.

Currently, a wounded warrior's branch of service evaluates the member for conditions that may make him or her unfit for duty. This evaluation initiates the medical examination board process. Following separation or retirement from service, the member is again evaluated by the VA for disability and compensation. The pilot process streamlines and makes more transparent both processes through concurrent rather than sequential processing, more information for the

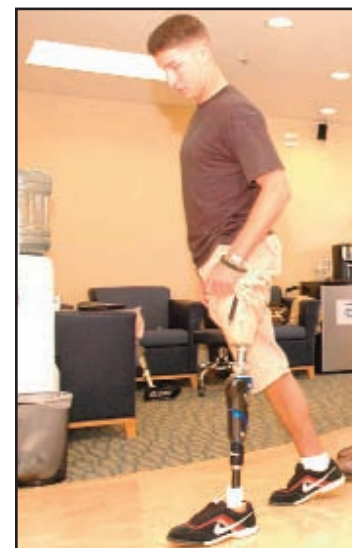
member during the process and comprehensive information regarding entitlements from both agencies at the time of the separation.

Under the pilot, only one evaluation is necessary after a member is referred for a service medical evaluation board. The single evaluation also helps servicemembers get comprehensive information about their benefits, including TRICARE.

The pilot is a result of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. The goal is to simplify healthcare and treatment for injured servicemembers and veterans and deliver benefits as quickly as possible.

The pilot was initially tested at three Military Treatment Facilities in the National Capitol Region – Malcolm Grow Medical Center at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

Since the pilot program began, the VA indicates more than 700 servicemembers have participated in the pilot. To collect and evaluate data from other geographic regions, 19 more installations have been added to the study.



Marine Corps Cpl. Garrett Jones gets a final fitting for his prosthetic leg at the Naval Medical Center San Diego Comprehensive Combat and Complex Casualty Care (C5) facility, in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan.

Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Greg Mitchell

For more information about how TRICARE works for medically retired servicemembers, visit www.tricare.mil.

For more information, visit www.vba.va.gov/vba.
Veteran Affairs

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Community Briefs

Community Forum planned

The garrison Community Forum, hosted by the U.S. Army Garrison commander, will be held Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. at the Getaway club at Fort McPherson.

The Directorate of Emergency Services fire department staff will offer blood pressure checks at this forum.

The forum provides attendees an opportunity to discuss issues and events concerning Fort McPherson, Fort Gillem and the local community. Attendees are encouraged to recommend specific topics to be addressed and to make presentations that may be of interest to the attendees.

For more information, call Pam Bates, management analyst for the garrison Plans, Analysis and Integration Office, at 464-3015 or send an e-mail message to pam.d.bates@us.army.mil.

Job fair slated for Feb. 12

The Army Community Service and Army Career and Alumni Program staffs will host a job fair Feb. 12 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at The Commons at Fort McPherson. Attendees should bring copies of their resumés and dress for success. Representatives from more than 50 organizations will be present to assist and answer questions.

For more information, call 464-2197 or 464-3266.

Clinic closed for holiday

The Lawrence Joel Army Health Clinic will be closed Feb. 13 and 16 for the day of nonscheduled activity and the President's Day holiday. The closure includes the main and refill pharmacies. No patient care services will be available.

For more information, call 464-2778.

For emergencies, call 911.

Veterinary clinic open Feb. 14

The Veterinary Treatment Facility at Fort McPherson has appointments available for vaccinations Feb. 14 from 8 a.m. until noon. No walk-ins will be seen.

For more information, call 464-2911.

Prayer breakfast scheduled for Feb. 18

A prayer breakfast is planned Feb. 18 at 7:30 a.m. at The Commons at Fort McPherson. The theme is "Your Values, My Values, Our Values."

The guest speaker for the event will be Chap. (Col.) Samuel J.T. Boone, commandant, U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School.

The breakfast buffet costs \$5 for Civilians and

Soldiers in ranks staff sergeant and above and \$2 for Soldiers in ranks sergeant and below.

Unit command sergeants major have tickets.

For more information, call 464-2004.

Financial training available

The Army Community Service (ACS) staff presents a variety of advanced financial training classes. Classes are scheduled from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. in Bldg. 62, room 208, on Fort McPherson.

The class schedule is:

- Feb. 19 – Stocks: Learn what stocks are and the fundamentals of stock valuation.
- Feb. 24 – Bonds: Learn the different types of bonds and how to purchase them.
- Feb. 26 – Mutual Funds: Learn what a mutual fund is and how to evaluate performance.
- March 5 – Insurance and annuities: Learn about the different types of insurance and how much insurance is enough. The instructor will discuss different types of annuities and the tax consequences.
- March 10 – Wills, Estates and Trusts: Learn the fundamentals of estate planning, wills and trusts.

Classes are open to Soldiers, retired military personnel, Family members and Civilian employees. Participants are welcome to bring their lunch.

For reservations, call the ACS staff at 464-4070.

Art contest open to military children

The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) is hosting the "The Art of Being a Military Child" campaign, a competition open to military-connected children in grades kindergarten through high school.

The campaign allows children to submit their visual artwork, films and video presentations, or poems and essays for display at the MCEC 10th annual conference.

Selected artwork, films and poetry will be published in the MCEC conference program, the annual calendar, the "On the Move" magazine or other publications, and will be considered for the "Reel Military" Youth Film and Video Festival.

Suggested topics for entries include:

- Parents
- Cultures experienced
- Family
- Helping the community
- Military lifestyle

- Transitions/changes
- Life lessons learned
- Wishes, hopes and dreams

All submissions are due to MCEC by Feb. 27.

Applicants should mail submissions to:

Military Child Education Coalition

108 East FM 2410, Suite D

Harker Heights, TX 76548

For guidelines regarding the Call for the Arts, visit militarychild.org/child-student/arts or call 254-953-1923.

Safety center launches redesigned site

The U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center has a new Web site that will make it easier for users to find information and tools necessary to help keep the Army safe.

The site will feature an in-depth contact and feedback page designed to provide users a quick link to program managers and to gain user feedback for site improvements. Users can bookmark a new page or send the link to a friend or colleague.

Changes to the Web page were made based on direct customer feedback and several user focus groups. Soldiers and leaders will find the tools they most often use right up front rather than having to make several clicks to find them.

The center collects, analyzes and disseminates actionable information to assist leaders, Soldiers, Families and Civilians in preserving and protecting the Army's combat resources.

The new Web address is <https://safety.army.mil>.

Post policy requires hands-free cell phone use; violators to pay fine

The Directorate of Emergency Services Security Police staff will be strictly enforcing the cell phone use policy.

Fort McPherson Regulation 210-5 (Installation Regulation Policy and Procedures), paragraph 3-23, does not prohibit Soldiers talking on cell phones while walking around the installation. However, policy for vehicle operators clearly states that, "Vehicle operators at Fort McPherson and Fort Gillem will not use cell phones unless the vehicle is safely parked or unless drivers are using a hands-free device. The wearing of any other listening device (except for hands-free cellular phones) while operating a motor vehicle is prohibited."

Violators will be issued a U.S. District Court Violation Notice, which carries a fine of \$25 with a \$25 processing fee, totaling \$50.

TRICARE offers primary caregivers rest, relief



TRICARE now offers primary caregivers of active duty servicemembers much needed rest, relief and reprieve thanks to section 1633 of the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The respite benefit specifically helps homebound servicemembers who need frequent help from their primary caregiver.

It is important to know that “homebound” members are servicemembers whose conditions or injuries make them unable to leave home without taxing effort. “Frequent” means servicemembers need more than two interventions during the eight-hour period per day that the primary caregiver would normally be sleeping.

To provide the best possible help and respite for caregivers, this benefit will provide a maximum of eight hours of respite per day, five days per week.

“What this benefit does is provide caregivers the opportunity to rest,” said Maj. Gen. Elder

Granger, deputy director, TRICARE Management Activity. “We know that homebound patients have special needs that take a real toll on the caregiver, and, if a caregiver is overworked, the wounded, ill or injured servicemember may suffer physically or mentally.”

“TRICARE knows that life doesn’t stop when a servicemember is injured. Most of the time it just speeds up,” said Granger. “TRICARE wants to help the caregivers who help our servicemembers. That’s why this benefit is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2008, and has no cost shares or co-pays.”

Active duty servicemembers or their legal representatives can submit receipts for reimbursement of respite care services that were provided after Jan. 1, 2008, by a TRICARE-authorized Home Health Agency.

For more information about this benefit, visit the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.mil.

Nutrition tip

Whatever brand of hot dogs you choose, be careful not to condemn them to death by boiling. Surely you've seen it – the poor dog boiled until the casing splits and the insides ooze out into unappealing blobs. Then a dripping wet dog is plopped into a classic soft hot dog bun creating a soggy mess. Yuk!



Hot dogs are precooked, so they only need 3 to 5 minutes in gently simmering water to cook. A much better method, aside from grilling, is cooking the hot dogs on a non-stick griddle or skillet over medium heat. Turn them with tongs from time to time until they are heated through – moist on the outside and very lightly browned is just about right.

The only decision left is what to top them with. Yellow mustard and sweet pickle relish is the classic topping.

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Leisure Activities

Tickets sales offered at the Fort McPherson and Fort Gillem Leisure Activities Center Ticket Office are final and include all applicable service charges imposed on the IMWRF by the vendor. To reserve tickets using a Visa, MasterCard, American Express or the MWR card, call the staff at 464-4392 or 464-3677. Counter sales are conducted in Bldg. 135 at Fort McPherson Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. The office opens at 11 a.m. on the first workday of each month.

For tour and travel information, call the Installation Tour and Travel staff at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., at 760-763-3183 or 760-763-3184 or visit latitudes.mwrtvl.com.

Atlanta Hawks play at home

Tickets are available for Atlanta Hawks games played at Philips Arena. Tickets cost \$70 for 100-level seats at the Cleveland and Boston games. All other game tickets cost \$55 and \$65 for 100-level seats, \$32 for 200-level seats and \$20 for 300-level seats. Times vary. All sales are final. Available dates include:

- Feb. 7 against LA Clippers
- Feb. 27 against Miami
- March 1 against Cleveland
- March 7 against Detroit
- March 9 against New Orleans
- March 11 against Utah
- March 13 against Indiana
- March 15 against Portland
- March 19 against Dallas
- March 25 against San Antonio
- March 27 against Boston

For directions, visit www.philipsarena.com.

Ringling Brothers Circus tickets ready

Tickets are available for the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus at Philips Arena. Ticket prices range from \$18 to \$25.

Guests can see dogs fly; Asian elephants skip, hop and groove; and a performer stand eye-to-eye with a pack of Bengal tigers. Circus celebrities help rev-up the motorcycle madness featuring one cycle

on a high wire and seven riders in the "Globe of Steel." Aerial acts fill the sky including a rare double-decker trapeze and Chinese acrobats. Audience members can participate in select events that happen early in the first half of the performance.

All sales are final. Available dates and times include:

- Feb. 14 at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., \$25
- Feb. 15 at 11 a.m., \$25
- Feb. 16 at 12:30 p.m., \$25
- Feb. 19 at 7:30 p.m., \$18
- Feb. 21 at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., \$25
- Feb. 22 at noon and 4 p.m., \$25

For directions, visit www.philipsarena.com.

UniverSoul Circus tickets available

Tickets are available for the UniverSoul Circus at the Big Top Tent at Turner Field.

The UniverSoul Circus presents a wide spectrum of African-American talent that reaches into their culture.

Available dates and times are:

- Feb. 20 at 7:30 p.m., \$18
- Feb. 21 at noon, \$18.50
- Feb. 21 at 4 and 7:30 p.m., \$23
- Feb. 22 at 12:30 p.m., \$18.50
- Feb. 22 at 3:30 and 6:30 p.m., \$23

Fox Theatre performances set

• Alvin Ailey's American Dance Theater presents "50 Years – Cultural Ambassador to the World." The performance is dedicated to enriching the heritage of American modern dance and safeguarding the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience. Tickets cost \$53 for performances Feb. 21 at 2 p.m. and Feb. 22 at 1 p.m.

• "A Chorus Line" comes into view on a bare stage, where casting for a new Broadway musical is almost complete. For 17 dancers, this audition is what they've worked for – with every drop of sweat, every hour of training, every day of their lives. The play takes audience members through the dancers' journey. Tickets cost \$53.90 for performances March 7 at 2 p.m. and March 8 at 1:30 p.m.

Play Group set

For parents and children
infant to 5 years
Feb. 19

Bldg. 62, Fort McPherson
11 until 11:30 a.m.

For more information,
call 464-3335.



Medallions for sale

The U.S. Army Garrison Directorate of Morale, Welfare and Recreation staff is offering a 3-inch, bronze medallion depicting the city of Atlanta and its attractions for sale for \$16.

The medallions are available for purchase at the Leisure Activities Center, Bldg. 135 at Fort McPherson.

For more information, call 464-4393.

Religious Services

Fort McPherson

9:45 a.m. Sunday School

Post Chapel Center, Bldg. 51
464-2004

11 a.m. Sunday Worship Service

Post Chapel, Bldg. 42
Chap. (Col.) Carl Young

9:30 a.m. Sunday Mass

Cantonment Chapel, Bldg. 240
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

10:45 a.m. Religious Education Classes

Cantonment Chapel, Bldg. 240

6:30 p.m. Wednesday Awana

Bldg. 46

Daily Mass

Monday through Friday at noon

11 a.m. Thursday – Women's Bible Study

Post Chapel Center, Bldg. 51

Fort Gillem

9:45 a.m. Adult Sunday School

Bldg. 742

11 a.m. Sunday Worship Service

Post Chapel, Bldg. 734
Chap. (Capt.) Brad Godding

Jewish Representative

Jimmy Bradford
770-461-4298

Islamic Representative

Jalaluddin A. Malik
jalaluddin.malik@us.army.mil
464-0109

Fort McPherson Post Theater movies

Space Chimps (G), tonight
Bee Movie, (G), Feb. 6

The House Bunny, (PG-13),
Feb. 13

Pineapple Express, (R),
Feb. 20

Shows start at 7 p.m.

Bring the whole family and your own refreshments.



Classified
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Classified
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In my opinion ...

Navy admiral: lessons I learned in Army classrooms

Adm. Michael G. Mullen
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Our Army is the center of gravity for the U.S. military — and this center includes the Guard and Reserves. It is the best and most combat-hardened Army that the nation has ever known — indeed, the world has ever known. We must do all we can to make sure it stays that way.

Let me take you through some of the things I have learned about our Army, which we all serve. Some of these things might surprise you, most probably will not, but I thought you might be interested in how this Sailor has come to see it.

The first thing I learned about the Army is “Hooah.”

There are 1,000 or 10,000 or 100,000 different ways to say “Hooah,” but I learned that it is more than just a battle cry; it is a way of life. It says you will never quit, never surrender, never leave your buddy. It says you are proud of the hardships you have endured because there is deep meaning in every one of them.

Go stand atop one of those hills in the Korengal Valley in Afghanistan, where I was last February and July, with paratroopers assigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team. Look around at the utter desolation of the place and the spartan conditions that these young people are living in. You cannot help but come back a little thick in the throat.

I awarded a Silver Star to a young officer there, Capt. Greg Ambrosia, who placed himself in the line of fire to direct his men to safety. I pinned on some Bronze Stars, commendation medals and Purple Hearts.

These troops had been out there 14 months and seen a lot of tough fighting. They lost a lot of good Soldiers. We often forget the impact of war on those who were alongside our fallen. That loss impacts them for the rest of their lives.

When those Soldiers yelled “Hooah!” after the ceremony, I understood that it was not because they were proud of their new medals; it was because they were proud of the difference they knew they were making together, as a team — as an Army.

The second thing I have learned is that our Army has become a world-class counterinsurgency force in an extraordinarily short time. In Iraq, I walked down the streets of Sadr City, and visited an outpost in Mosul.

These were places where, just a few weeks before, we could not have visited at all. Al Qaeda is clearly on the run in Iraq, and the surge and Anbar Awakening and even Muqtada al Sadr's ceasefire all helped to

make that happen. But what really turned it around was the counterinsurgency tactics that our troops embraced and perfected.

Think about it: As late as the winter of 2007, when President Bush announced the surge, attacks were averaging nearly 180 a day, the highest level since major combat operations ended. A new national intelligence estimate predicted that Iraqi leaders would be hard pressed to reconcile over the next year and a half, but look where we are now.

Our commitment to counterinsurgency warfare worked. That meant sharing risk with the Iraqis, which in turn meant a whole lot of courage on the part of our Soldiers, yet they prevailed because they learned, adapted and most of all believed.

Third, I learned that it is irresponsible to neglect the continual improvement of our conventional capabilities. I was struck during one of my first visits as chairman to an Army base — Fort Sill, Okla. — by how few young artillery officers had earned their basic qualifications because they had so often deployed outside their skill set. Now, as the chief of naval operations who deployed upwards of 12,000 Sailors to work on the ground in the U.S. Central Command theater, I understand the benefit for people to develop themselves.

We need more balance in the way we think, train and resource ourselves. Very real threats still exist from regional powers who possess robust conventional and, in some cases, nuclear capabilities. We must restore some of the more conventional and expeditionary expertise that we will require in the uncertain years ahead.

It is difficult to modernize while fighting a war, but there is also an argument that a combat footing generates the energy and sense of urgency that allow us to meet the pace of change. The essential truth is that we are at war — and it is a war that is moving at lightning speed.

That brings me to my fourth observation: our peacetime processes are not adapted to a wartime reality. We simply have not kept pace with the demands that this war requires of our wounded, fallen and their families. Some wounded servicemembers are waiting too long to receive disability ratings and transition out



Admiral Michael G. Mullen

of the military, leaving them and their families in limbo. Indeed, servicemembers tell me that their most precious resource is time. They want their lives back. They want to move on.

I know we have launched a pilot program with the Department of Veterans Affairs designed to streamline the transition process, but we are still not moving quickly enough, and I hope that we are able to expand it as rapidly as possible.

Recent studies suggest that as many as 20 percent of today's troops may suffer from posttraumatic stress (PTS) brought on by combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many are understandably wary of the stigma attached to mental health issues — a problem we can alleviate by making everyone undergo screening, so no one has to raise his or her hand.

I recently had the chance to visit the VA hospital in Palo Alto, Calif., and talked with about 30 mostly active duty PTS patients from every service. It bothered me to see what they had to go through just to get help — essentially bottoming out, like they were in an alcohol or a drug rehabilitation program.

The families of the fallen and the wounded never lost the American dream. They still want to work; they want to send their kids to school; they want to get an education; they want to own a piece of the rock. Indeed, they have earned it, and it is up to us to ensure that they get the chance.

Finally, I have learned that the Army, above all, is a learning organization. From rapid development and adaptation of doctrine to command organization, to movement of brigade combat teams and modular headquarters, to the way people are promoted, the Army is constantly changing and adapting to meet the challenges of the day.

We are seeing people succeed, grow and lead. We are seeing people unafraid to challenge assumptions or old ways.

Our midgrade noncommissioned officers and young captains love what they do. They have led in combat. They are remarkably resilient, and they do us all proud. Junior officers and enlisted men and women need to know that it is right to question the direction of their Service and seniors. In fact, they should be rewarded for it. That sort of feedback is healthy, and it incites the kind of change we need.

As Gen. George Marshall once quipped, “Soldiers are intelligent. Give them the bare tree; let them supply the leaves.” I have certainly seen the forest for the trees here, and have learned a lot about the Army.

Most importantly, I have learned from the Army.